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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet lists 15 standards, and criteria to be met to reach those standards, used in accrediting American Montessori Society schools. Part 1, dealing with institutional stability, describes standards and criteria for school organization and administration, financial practices and procedures, physical facilities, enrollment policies, child records, personnel practices, community relationships, and transportation services. Part 2 concerns the Montessori developmental education program. It lists standards and criteria for school goals and philosophy, classroom policies and procedures, staff qualifications, material resources, program planning and implementation, organization of environments, staff behavior, and auxiliary programs. Criteria differ from those for other private schools in specifying procedures central to the Montessori curriculum (for example, each child's having the opportunity for individual activity for at least half of the school day, vertical age grouping, and the use of Montessori apparatus and "practical life" resource materials). (CB)

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STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

FOR

AMS SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

AMS School Accreditation Commission

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AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY
150 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011

PART I. INSTITUTIONAL STABILITY

STANDARD 1.0--ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

THE SCHOOL'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES PROVIDE FOR STABILITY AND CONTINUITY OF OPERATION.

Criteria

1.1. The school maintains an up-to-date description of its legal identity and ownership.

1.2. The school maintains a record of its history.

1.3. The school makes an Organizational Chart available to staff and parents.

1.4. The role of the ownership or governing board is clearly described in writing.

1.5. The roles of the administrator and any other administrative or office staff members are described in writing, communicated, and periodically assessed.

1.6. The school arranges for legal counsel to be readily available to the administration and governing body.

STANDARD 2.0--FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

THE SCHOOL'S FINANCIAL PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES CONTRIBUTE TO ITS STABILITY AND EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES.

Criteria

2.1. The school makes a periodic assessment of its assets and liabilities.

2.2. The school maintains accurate records of collections and disbursements.

2.3. The school prepares and follows a written budget.

2.4. The school has arranged for the assistance of a professional accounting service in preparation of its annual financial reports or external audit.

2.5. The school maintains or otherwise contracts for appropriate insurance coverage: Fire and extended coverage, comprehensive general liability, and workman's compensation.

STANDARD 3.0--FACILITIES

THE SCHOOL PROVIDES AND MAINTAINS FACILITIES WHICH SUPPORT ITS PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN.

Criteria

3.1. The school meets required state, county, and local licensing standards and holds the appropriate licenses.

3.2. The school takes responsibility for provision of the site, including a written five-year plan for the management and improvement of owned land and buildings, or a signed agreement for leased facilities that defines responsibility for insurance and repairs.

3.3. The school maintains its buildings and grounds in cleanliness and good repair.

3.4. The school facility offers appropriate space for the performance of functions related to the operation of its classes:
1. Administration.
2. Storage and locking storage.
3. Staff rest and/or work space.
4. Isolation (due to illness or injury).

3.5. The school has a written plan for safety in the event of emergency, such as fire and natural disaster.

3.6. The school maintains an inventory list of all equipment with a life-span of more than one year.

3.7. The school implements a written policy regarding site risks and hazards.

3.8. The school provides space for safe, vigorous physical activity indoors and out.

3.9. The indoor space used for the educational program allows at least 30 square feet per child.

3.10. The school requires a daily sterilization procedure for all equipment used in preparing or serving food.

STANDARD 4.0--ENROLLMENT

THE SCHOOL PUBLISHES ITS ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

Criteria

4.1. The school maintains a truth-in-advertising policy with regard to its published information.

4.2. Published financial policies include fees, payment schedules, late payment, refund and cancellation of contract, scholarships and discounts (if any), and credit in the event of absence, withdrawal, or dismissal.

4.3. The school communicates prior to enrollment its expectations for responsibilities of the school, the family, and the child.

4.4. The school publishes its admission criteria and procedures, including a nondiscrimination statement.

4.5. The school publishes its withdrawal policy and procedures.

4.6. The school completes and communicates its assessment of the child's development and progress to parents at regular intervals.

4.7. The school publishes policy information about other services it may provide, such as food or transportation.

STANDARD 5.0--CHILD RECORDS

THE SCHOOL MAINTAINS POLICIES AND RECORDS TO ENCOURAGE AND DOCUMENT THE HEALTH, SAFETY, AND DEVELOPMENT OF EACH ENROLLED CHILD.

Criteria

5.1. The school maintains the following records at the site of attendance:
1. Child's emergency medical information.
2. Child's health information.
3. First Aid treatment administered for any injury or illness at school.
4. Medications administered at school.
5. Developmental progress assessment/transcript.
6. Attendance.

5.2. The school maintains and communicates to staff and parents written policies regarding the following:
1. Confidentiality of student records and parent right to review, comment, and release information.
2. Maintenance of records of previously enrolled children.
3. Prohibition of attendance during illness.
4. Provision for emergency treatment of illness/accidental injury.
5. Cases of suspected child abuse.

STANDARD 6.0--PERSONNEL

THE SCHOOL PROVIDES EVIDENCE OF FAIR AND ETHICAL PRACTICES FOR ALL STAFF--TEACHING AND NONTEACHING.

Criteria

6.1. The school provides written job descriptions for all staff members.

6.2. The school provides written personnel policies that cover standard issues in the field:
- A. Organizational chart.
- B. Period of employment and payroll schedule.
- C. Leave: for illness, study, or personal reasons.
- D. Requirements for staff medical examinations and annual TB test.
- E. Personal conduct of staff members.
- F. Procedures for annual evaluation/assessment of performance.
- G. Procedures for termination of employment.
- H. Handling of complaints and/or problems.
- I. Salary schedules or plan for structuring salaries.
- J. Renewal of employment.
- K. Any fringe benefits available (e.g., insurance, retirement).

6.3. The school provides a written employment agreement to each staff member in adequate detail, including:
- A. Term and hours of employment.
- B. Salary and schedule of payment.
- C. Job description, responsibility, and duties.
- D. Identification of immediate supervisor.
- E. Conditions for termination of agreement.

6.4. The school encourages professional commitment and growth in the staff.

6.5. The school provides for and maintains records of annual performance assessments of all staff members.

6.6. The school administrator and at least 50% of the certified teachers maintain active membership in the American Montessori Society.

STANDARD 7.0--COMMUNITY

THE SCHOOL'S POLICIES AND PROCEDURES PROVIDE FOR INTERACTIONS WITH ITS COMMUNITY.

Criteria

7.1. The school encourages observation visits by parents and other community members.

7.2. The school provides information about itself to the community.

7.3. The school maintains a central file of professional support services and agencies in the community.

7.4. The school provides for communication with parents on a regular basis.

7.5. The school involves all its adult participants in periodic assessment of its effectiveness.

7.6. The school serves as a resource network for its families by soliciting information concerning the families' needs and by providing information and connections to other agencies, programs, or family systems.

STANDARD 8.0--TRANSPORTATION

(This section does not apply if the service is not provided by the school. It DOES apply if the school OR the parent body contracts for the service through an independent agent or company.)

THE SCHOOL INSURES THAT ALL VEHICLES AND PROCEDURES USED IN OFFICIAL TRANSPORTATION PROVIDE FOR THE SAFETY OF ITS CHILDREN.

Criteria

8.1. The school provides a set of written policies and procedures regarding the safe operation of school vehicles to each driver, including:
   1. Rules for safe operation of the vehicle and care of children.
   2. Rules for safe behavior and a passenger safety education program.
   3. Instructions on what to do in the event of accident.
   4. Standards for daily pre-travel safety inspection of the vehicle.
   5. Qualifications for drivers and substitutes.

8.2. The school equips every vehicle used for student transport and trains drivers in the use and maintenance of emergency equipment, such as First Aid kit, fire extinguisher, and reflectors or flares.

8.3. The school carries or contracts for comprehensive collision and liability automotive insurance on any vehicles used in its transportation service.

8.4. The school carries non-owner liability insurance covering the use of vehicles owned by parents or employees of the school to transport students on an occasional basis.

8.5. The school provides for regular maintenance of all vehicles used in its transportation service and for routine checks of safe operating condition.

PART II. MONTESSORI DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

STANDARD 9.0--GOALS AND PHILOSOPHY

THE SCHOOL GOALS ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE BASIC MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY OF ASSISTING THE CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT OF FULL POTENTIAL.

Criteria

9.1. The school's educational goals and philosophy are defined in writing.

9.2. The stated goals and philosophy seem appropriate to the needs of the school population and in harmony with Montessori's descriptions of the nature of the child, the needs of the family, the prepared environment, and the role of the adult.

9.3. The educational goals and philosophy are reviewed periodically by the teaching staff and the governing board or owner(s).

STANDARD 10.0--POLICIES

POLICIES OF THE SCHOOL WHICH DIRECTLY AFFECT THE QUALITY OF CLASSROOM LIFE ARE CONSISTENT WITH ACCEPTED PRACTICES IN THE AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY.

Criteria

10.1. The school practices vertical grouping and assigns to each class (above the infant/toddler level) a balance of ages in a two-year or three-year age range.

10.2. The school assigns to one certified teacher a maximum number of children that is appropriate for the age level:

A. Infants (birth to 18 months)	8
B. Toddlers (18 to 36 months)	15
C. Preprimary, Elementary, Secondary	30

10.3. The over-all ratio of children to teaching staff (both certified and assistant teachers) is appropriate for the age level:

A. Infants (birth to 18 months)	4:1
B. Toddlers (18 to 36 months)	6:1
C. Preprimary (2.5 to 6 years)	15:1
D. Elementary (6 to 12 years)	20:1
E. Secondary (12 to 18 years)	20:1

10.4. The school provides for the orientation of new children into the program.

10.5. The school has a written statement of class ground rules (ABSOLUTE limits or guidelines for behavior).

10.6. The school has a written statement of classroom procedures (NEGOTIABLE limits or guidelines for behavior).

10.7. The school has a written description of discipline/support strategies, procedures, and policies, and prohibits the use of corporal punishment in the school.

10.8. The school requires from each directing teacher a schedule of the day (by major time blocks).

10.9. The school requires from each directing teacher a description of the systems used for student assessment, record keeping, and planning for individuals and groups.

10.10. The school provides for teacher participation in the following:

A. Selection of new materials.
B. Assessment of the state of repair of school equipment.
C. Definition of school goals.
D. Setting up daily schedules.
E. Definition of discipline/support strategies and procedures.

10.11. The school has a written policy concerning ownership and reimbursement for teacher-made materials.

STANDARD 11.0--STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATIONAL STAFF HAVE APPROPRIATE PREPARATION AND QUALIFICATIONS FOR PERFORMANCE OF ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES.

Criteria

11.1. Each directing teacher is Montessori-certified for the assigned age level by a training institution which has verified completion of a one-year course of study requiring a minimum of 300 hours of on-site instruction and 36 weeks of supervised student teaching.*

11.2. Each assistant teacher is at least 18 years of age and meets state preparation requirements for the position.

11.3 A school having more than one directing teacher designates an educational supervisor/coordinator, with a written job description, for the purpose of assisting the continuity of educational quality and of serving as a professional resource to other staff members.

* AMS recognizes AMS and AMI credentials without such verification.

STANDARD 12.0--MATERIAL RESOURCES

THE SCHOOL PROVIDES MATERIAL RESOURCES NECESSARY FOR EXCELLENCE OF PROGRAM.

Criteria

12.1. A water source and disposal system for each room environment. *(Not applicable at Secondary level)*

12.2. Furnishings of appropriate size and to meet the needs of the children in each group.

12.3. Furnishings (shelves/cabinets) for accessible display of curricular materials.

12.4. Appropriate Montessori apparatus for the child age-range served by each environment.

12.5. Practical Life resource materials for the child age-range served by each environment.

12.6. Other curriculum materials to meet the needs of the children who use each environment.

12.7. Instructional center/library collections.

STANDARD 13.0--PROGRAM PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

EACH EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT INCLUDES AND OFFERS CURRICULUM MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES WHICH ENCOURAGE THE CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT OF FULL POTENTIAL.

Criteria

13.1. The school defines in writing and communicates to the staff its expectations for physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development and achievement at each age-level served.

13.2. The school provides for staff awareness of community expectations for development and achievement for the age levels served.

THE CURRICULUM INCLUDES MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO PROMOTE AGE-APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOLLOWING:

13.3. Concentration.

13.4. Observation skills.

13.5. Awareness of order and sequence.

13.6. Large-muscle coordination.

13.7. Small-muscle coordination.

13.8. The acquisition of practical skills.

13.9. Perceptual awareness and discrimination, including the ability to recognize and identify the attributes of objects.

13.10. Mathematical/quantitative concepts.

13.11. Language skills, including opportunities for listening, self-expression, and instruction in writing, reading, and other language arts.

13.12. Experience with the creative arts.

13.13. Understanding of the world of nature and the physical universe.

13.14. Experience with and understanding of the social sciences.

13.15. Experience with critical thinking skills and problem-solving techniques: question-asking, experimentation, and hypothesis development.

STANDARD 14.0--ORGANIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTS

THE ORGANIZATION OF EACH ROOM ENVIRONMENT IS CONGRUENT WITH MONTESSORI PRINCIPLES OF INDIVIDUALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENTAL APPROPRIATENESS.

Criteria

14.1. The particular materials/activities offered seem appropriate to the developmental period, abilities, and special needs of the children who use the environment.

14.2. The behavior of each child reflects awareness of a wide range of appropriate choices.

14.3. For each child, at least one-half of the school day provides opportunity for individual activity.

14.4. Curriculum materials are organized into logical groupings (such as, by curriculum area).

14.5. Within each grouping of material, there is a logical arrangement (such as, by level of difficulty or sequence of skill development).

14.6. The arrangement of furnishings offers a variety of activity spaces(such as: individual or group, floor or table, noisy or quiet, active or sedentary).

14.7. Activity spaces and procedures are organized to avoid conflict of interest (for example, a noise-generating activity is far away or isolated from a quiet activity area).

14.8. There is provision for display of visual stimuli and children's products.

14.9. Each activity or exercise is structured to provide purpose, procedure, closure, and opportunity for child success.

STANDARD 15.0--STAFF BEHAVIOR

THERE IS OBSERVABLE EVIDENCE THAT THE ADULTS RESPONSIBLE FOR EACH GROUP OF STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE BEHAVIORS WHICH FACILITATE CHILDREN'S OPTIMAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SKILLS AND INTELLECTUAL GROWTH, INCLUDING:

Criteria

15.1. Prepare the environment so that it appears clean and orderly.

15.2. Demonstrate and encourage care and precision in movement and the organization and use of materials and equipment.

15.3. Encourage child selection of activity.

15.4. Encourage child participation in maintaining the environment.

15.5. Demonstrate/communicate strategies for use of equipment.

15.6. Acknowledge and provide for expression of child social needs.

15.7. Acknowledge and demonstrate responsiveness to child emotional needs.

15.8. Acknowledge and demonstrate responsiveness to child self-expression.

15.9. Maintain adequate monitoring and overview of the environment. - Observation -

15.10. Communicate rules and procedures appropriate to the situation.

15.11. Model and facilitate prosocial behavior.

15.12. Model and facilitate positive techniques for conflict resolution.

15.13. Model and facilitate egalitarian interaction.

15.14. Provide effective leadership in group activities.

15.15. Communicate/coordinate activities with each other (with the other responsible adults).

STANDARD 16.0--AUXILIARY PROGRAMS

(This section does not apply if no auxiliary programs or services are offered by or through the school.)

AUXILIARY PROGRAMS OR SERVICES PROVIDED OR SPONSORED BY THE SCHOOL, SUCH AS DAY CARE, SUPPLEMENTARY OR ENRICHMENT CURRICULA, OR ACTIVITIES DIRECTED BY INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS, MEET ACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF QUALITY.

Criteria

16.1. The school publishes an adequate description of its auxiliary programs, including any additional fees.

16.2. Auxiliary programs are implemented without major disruption to the school's regular educational program.

16.3. The child-adult ratios for auxiliary activities do not exceed the maximums specified in Criteria 10.2. and 10.3.

16.4. The school provides adequate space for the implementation of auxiliary programs.

16.5. The school insures that equipment used in its auxiliary programs is appropriate for and sufficient to the success of the programs.

16.6. Personnel employed as specialized or adjunct staff for auxiliary programs are appropriately qualified for performance of their responsibilities.